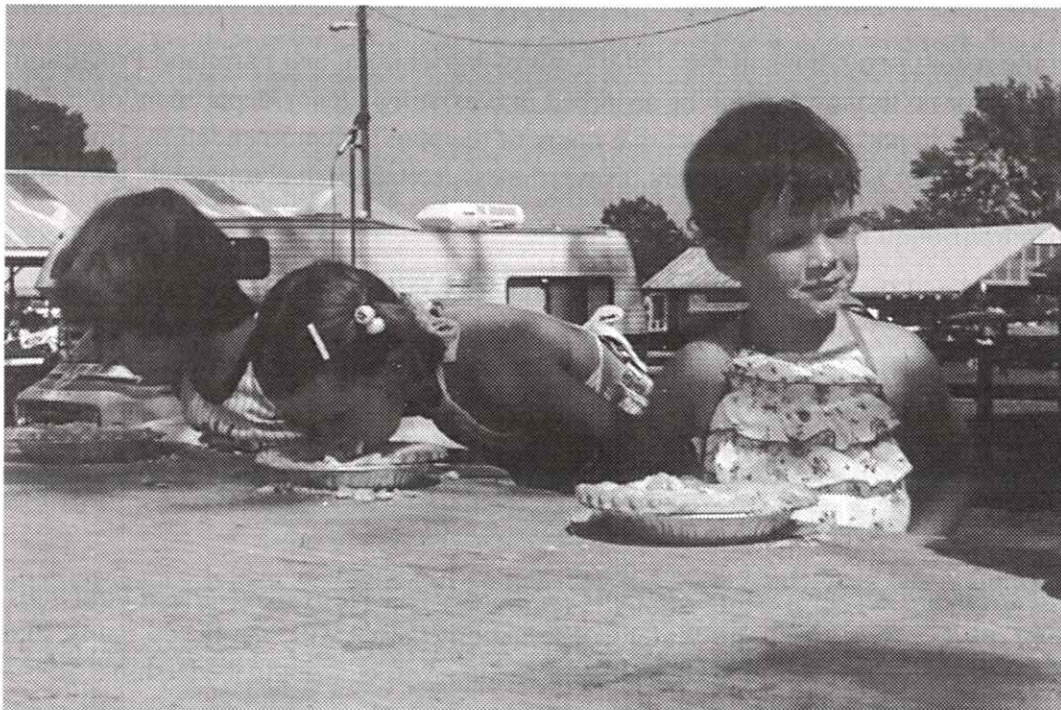


Implementation



Pie eating contest at Ulster County Fair

photo courtesy of Joe Munster

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the Ulster County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan should be carried out by a variety of entities including members of the farm community itself, town, county, and state government, agriculture service agencies, schools and the public. Implementation will be overseen by the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. In order to be successful, most efforts must be partnerships between multiple entities.

Ulster County government is especially important to implementation. As the plan's sponsor, the county has the opportunity to show leadership by integrating the agricultural industry into its economic development efforts. The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board will need to work closely with County government to provide a structure for monitoring the implementation of the plan.

Towns are also very important to the implementation of the plan, especially in the area of land use policies. Pro-agriculture land use policies applied at the local level are essential for maintaining the necessary land base for farming. Towns must also cooperate with the County on many of the initiatives in this plan, if they are to be effective.

Many of the recommendations in the Ulster County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan will cost little or no money and can be absorbed into existing agency/department operating budgets. This is in part due to the fact that many of the plan's recommendations involve ongoing efforts on the part of farmers and others. Nevertheless, certain plan components will require money and/or staff services.

On the county level there is limited staffing for agencies providing agricultural services. As agencies attempt to do more with less, agency partnerships and public/private coordination become the norm. With these new partnerships comes an increased need for coordination and communication. One strategy for dealing with this would be to seek funds to create an *Agricultural Specialist* position to facilitate coordination and implementation of the plan. An Agricultural Specialist answering to the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board would expedite the following tasks:

1. *Application of a rating system to Ulster County land to identify agricultural land most in need of preservation.* Soil and Water Conservation District will supply soil maps; Planning, SWCD, Cornell Cooperative Extension and farmers will contribute leadership.
2. *Production and execution of a county-wide agricultural business and retention survey.* An economic analysis of Ulster County's agriculture industry including property tax implications, job retention and creation, statistical information as to commodities produced, economic development potential, impact on tourism, etc. needs to be developed. Cornell Cooperative Extension and Ulster County Development Corporation can provide leadership to this project, but much coordination is needed for implementation.
3. *Promotion of purchase of development rights programs and conservation easements.* Agencies and individuals will need to stay abreast of new policies and opportunities relating

IMPLEMENTATION

to these protection techniques and provide management to the processes as they occur in Ulster County.

4. *Obtaining implementation dollars.* Grant writing will be an essential component for successful implementation. Agencies and individuals could seek these dollars, compile the necessary data for grant submission and obtain partnership commitments.
5. *Creation of a model right-to-farm law.* The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board would provide leadership for this project, but research of existing plans as well as networking between towns, county and state will involve intensive coordination.
6. *Creation of a new agricultural district and coordination of agricultural district reviews.* Soil and Water Conservation District, Ulster County Planning Department, the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board and Cornell Cooperative Extension will provide the necessary link between the state, county, towns, and participating farmers.
7. *Creation of an Ulster County agriculture traveling information booth.* Intensive coordination between farmers, Ulster County Tourism, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Ulster County Development Corporation, and the media will be needed to create displays that promote Ulster County agriculture at public events such as fairs, festivals, shows, etc.
8. *Production of Educational Materials* Many of the strategies listed in the plan involve the production of educational materials. Much coordination will be necessary to assist farmers and county agencies to produce these materials and to create educational opportunities for all of the audiences mentioned in this document.

Implementation money can come from a variety of sources. As a practical consideration, Ulster County should invest in implementation of the plan as an economic development tool in support of one of its most important industries, just as it does now with other economic development initiatives. Similarly, County departments and agricultural service agencies should devote a portion of their time and budget to plan implementation, as it is fundamental to their missions.

Implementation money is also available from other sources. New York State has included \$4 million in its FY 97-98 budget for implementation of County plans. Ulster County is eligible for matching fund grants of up to \$500,000 for farmland protection projects, including the acquisition of land *once this plan is approved.*

The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board is charged with overseeing the execution of the entire plan. The Board recognizes that implementation will occur over many years and that some items will occur long before others. The plan's goals and objectives may be revised or deleted and new recommendations pursued as time passes. The Board will review the plan annually to determine if its goals are being met and if implementation is occurring in a timely fashion.

Ultimately, the success or failure of this plan is dependent on the involvement of the farm community. Through their support, they will decide what is and is not implemented.